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## **Christos Tsoraklidis: The Greek priest who swaps clericals for camo to honour Anzac Day**



Every year on Anzac Day, Greek Orthodox Priest and President of the Greek Ex-Servicemen Association of South Australia, Christos Tsoraklidis, swaps his clerical for camouflage and together with other members he participates in the Remembrance Day events to honour those who served the country in the Great War.

“It’s a matter of national pride,” says the 65-year-old priest who has served the religious community of St Dimitrios in Salisbury, Adelaide for more than three decades and enlisted in the Greek Army for two years, before immigrating to Australia in the 1980s.

Tsoraklidis was appointed President of SA's Greek Ex-Servicemen Association four years ago with the local Bishop's blessings. Since then, he's been on a mission to keep the Association alive and carry its legacy into the future.

"The Association was founded in 1947 and its constitution is as old. In a recent meeting we decided that it should be reviewed and the plan is to incorporate new articles that provide for succession," he says, explaining that the majority of the Association's 90 members are over 75 years of age.

"If we don't act it will naturally fade away together with its members," he says stressing that another determining factor for the future of the Association, is the lack of a permanent roof which has been delayed due to "political circumstances".

"We have the plans and we expect to receive the funds in June or July. A month later the building will be ready," says Tsoraklidis.

Part of the building is set to become a mini-Hellenic War Museum, where visitors will have the opportunity learn more about Greece's modern military history.

"This initiative has been in the plans since 2017. The exhibits will include photographs, models, memorabilia and replicas of weapons."

Although the Greek Ex-Servicemen Association of South Australia will not participate in this year's state events due to the fact that Anzac Day coincides with Palm Sunday which marks the start of the Holy Week, Mr Tsoraklidis reminisces on the visit of the Greek Presidential Guard in Adelaide two years ago and looks forward to more events like this.

"It was a great honour to be able to march beside the 'Evzones' and every time we march, we can see the admiration and pride in peoples' eyes. This is what keeps us going," says Tsoraklidis is also expressing his admiration for the Association's members who despite their age are always ready to don their uniforms and salute those who made the ultimate sacrifice.



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# Saint Joseph the Hesychast

